

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 01721 281400 Z

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SCA-01 H-02 L-03 SS-14 NSC-10 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7012

INFO PANCANAL

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: ELAB, CGEN, PN, PQ

SUBJECT: SPECIAL IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION FOR CANAL ZONE

1. DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE MADE AWARE THAT DURING RECENT VISIT TO CANALZONE REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT L. LEGGETT, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON PANAMA CANAL OF HOUSE COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES, DISCUSSED WITH ME THE SUBJECT OF SPECIAL IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION FOR CANAL ZONE. OBJECTIVE OF SUCH LEGISLATION WOULD BE TO PERMIT UNSEPCIFIED NUMBER OF PANAMANIAN CITIZENS RESIDING IN CANAL ZONE TO ENTER U. S. AS IMMIGRANTS OUTSIDE ESTABLISHED QUOTA SYSTEM AND WAIVER OF CERTAIN OTHER REQUIREMENTS. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS NO DRAFT LEGISLATION PREPARED OR OTHER ACTION YET TAKEN.

2. APPEAL WAS MADE TO CONGRESSMAN LEGGETT BY CANAL ZONE LATIN AMERICAN CIVIC COUNCIL WHICH REPRESENTS THE 6500 NON- U. S. CITIZEN RESIDENTS OF CANAL ZONE MADE UP MOSTLY OF PERSONS OF BLACK WEST INDIAN DESCENT. THESE PERSONS ARE DESCENDANTS OF CANAL BUILDERS WHO HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN ZONE AND WHOSE CULTURAL AND IDENTITY TIES ARE TO U. S. THEIR CHILDREN, INCLUDING

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 01721 281400 Z

THOSE HAVING ALREADY REACHED ADULTHOOD, FACE BLEAK OPPORTUNITY OF EMPLOYMENT IN CANAL ZONE. CONCERN OF GROUP IS EMPHASIZED BY FEARS THAT CHANGED TREATY CONDITIONS WILL WORK SERIOUS DISADVANTAGES ON THEM, HENCE APPEAL TO CONGRESSMAN LEGGETT FOR U. S. TO GRANT FAVORED IMMIGRATION STATUS TO DEPENDENTS. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT UP TO 1,000 YOUNG ADULTS WOULD INITIALLY SEEK IMMIGRATION, FOLLOWED BY UP TO 100 ANNUALLY THEREAFTER FOR PERIOD OF SEVERAL YEARS.

3. COMMENT: IF INDEED PROPOSED, SUCH LEGISLATION WOULD SEEM TO BE UNDESIRABLE ON TWO COUNTS: IT WOULD RESULT IN PASSING CANAL ZONE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM TO UNITED STATES, EXACERBATING PROBLEM ALREADY PREVALENT AMONG SOME ETHNIC GROUPS ; AND, WOULD BY-PASS EXISTING REQUIREMENTS FOR PANAMANIAN CITIZENS APPLYING FOR IMMIGRANT STATUS AND PATIENTLY WAITING SOME 18 MONTHS UNDER WESTERN HEMISPHERE LIMITATION. GOVERNOR PARKER DID NOT DISCUSS SUBJECT WITH CONGRESSMAN LEGGETT BUT BELIEVES THAT SUCH LEGISLATION WOULD HAVE A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON A SERIOUS SOCIAL AND NEO-POLITICAL PROBLEM OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE CANAL ZONE.
SAYRE

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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